

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Residents of the Central Coast and Americans across the country will see immediate benefits when the health insurance legislation is signed into law, Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) said on Friday.

"This bill gives Americans more choices and lowers health care costs for everyone," Rep. Farr said. "As soon as the bill is signed into law, young people, small businesses, seniors and Americans who have been discriminated against by insurance companies will see relief."

Among the provisions that will take effect immediately:

- Begins to close the Medicare Part D donut hole, the gap in coverage where seniors are forced to shoulder all the cost for prescription drugs, with \$250 rebates for all seniors who hit the donut hole.
- Creates a temporary high-risk insurance pool for individuals who have been uninsured for several months or have been denied a policy because of pre-existing conditions. This will be replaced by the Health Insurance Exchange in 2013.
- Prohibits health insurance companies from placing lifetime caps on coverage.
- Small businesses that provide coverage to their employees will be eligible for a tax credit of up to 35 percent of premiums.
- Prohibits insurers from nullifying or rescinding a patient's policy when they file a claim for benefits, except in the case of fraud.
- Requires health plans to allow young people through age 26 to remain on their parents' insurance policy, at the parents' choice.
- Eliminates co-payments for preventive services and exempts preventive services from deductibles under the Medicare program.
- Improves the low-income protection programs in Medicare to assure more individuals are able to access this vital help.
- Prohibits Medicare Advantage plans from charging enrollees higher cost-sharing for services in their private plan than what is charged in traditional Medicare.

- Discourages excessive price increases by insurance companies through review and disclosure of insurance rate increases.
- Allows Americans to keep their COBRA coverage until the Exchange is in place and they can access affordable coverage.
- Creates a long-term care insurance program to be financed by voluntary payroll deductions to provide benefits to adults who become functionally disabled.
- Creates a \$10 billion fund to finance a temporary reinsurance program to help offset the costs of expensive health claims for employers that provide health benefits for retirees age 55-64.
- Increases funding for Community Health Centers, allowing them to double the number of patients they see.
- Provides new investment in training programs to increase the number of primary care doctors, nurses, and public health professionals.

"It was almost 100 years ago that former Republican President Teddy Roosevelt promoted a national health insurance plan, so it's about time we finally bring these changes about," Rep. Farr said. "By enacting these provisions immediately, and others over time, we will lower costs for everyone and give all Americans and small businesses more control over their health care options."

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